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New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Hoscheit (Luxembourg), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

Agenda item 40 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Draft resolution (A/58/L.34)

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Draft resolutions (A/58/L.22 and A/58/L.35)

(e) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Draft resolution (A/58/L.33)

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): Members will recall that the General Assembly considered sub-items (a) to (e) of agenda item 40 during its 37th to 39th plenary meetings, which took place from 20 to 21 October 2003.

I give the floor to the representative of South Africa to introduce draft resolutions A/58/L.22 and A/58/L.35, on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Oosthuizen (South Africa): On behalf of the Group of African States, I have the honour to introduce, under sub-item (b) of agenda item 40, concerning the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance to individual countries or regions, draft resolution A/58/L.22, entitled "Emergency humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia", and draft resolution A/58/L.35, entitled "Emergency humanitarian assistance to Malawi".

Draft resolution A/58/L.22, regarding Ethiopia, which is before the General Assembly for the second time, is generally an updated version of the previous draft resolution, and contains very few additions. Among the major elements of the draft resolution is the call for the international community to support the programme of the Coalition for Food Security in Ethiopia, which aims at breaking the cycle of food-aid dependency within the next three to five years. We believe that the implementation of that programme, along with other existing programmes mentioned in the draft resolution, will be a breakthrough in fighting the severe consequences of recurrent drought in that country. We ask that the General Assembly adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

I should also like to announce that, since the publication of draft resolution A/58/L.22, the following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: Austria, Bhutan, Canada, Congo, Cyprus, Denmark, Ecuador, France, Germany, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ireland, Israel, Jordan, Luxembourg,

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Mauritania, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovakia, Somalia, Sweden, Thailand, Ukraine and Yemen.

I also have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/58/L.35, entitled "Emergency humanitarian assistance to Malawi". This is a new draft resolution in the General Assembly. It has been necessitated by the serious food insecurity crisis caused by two consecutive years of drought, floods and heavy rains, leading to serious crop failure. The vulnerability of Malawian communities has also been exacerbated by the rapid spread of the human immunodeficiency syndrome — HIV/AIDS — poverty and malnutrition, particularly among children, creating greater levels of dependency and undermining that people's ability to cope with humanitarian crises.

The long-term consequences of natural disasters are likely to be severe for a poor developing country like Malawi, and call for international cooperation to assist in capacity-building in the areas of predicting, preparing for and responding to disasters. It is therefore the aim of this draft resolution to mobilize the international community and encourage it to maintain its unwavering support for the people of Malawi affected by humanitarian crises.

The draft resolution recalls all the relevant resolutions relating to humanitarian crises, including resolution 46/182, the annex of which contains the guiding principles for the provision of humanitarian assistance for natural disasters. Based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the draft resolution recognizes the right of everyone to a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being, including food, medical care, necessary social services and the right to security in the event of lack of livelihood due to circumstances beyond their control.

The draft resolution welcomes the positive role of the Government of Malawi in relief operations and coordination with the United Nations system. The efforts of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)through the United Nations consolidated appeals process is acknowledged, and OCHA is requested to continue to improve the effectiveness of that process.

The draft resolution also emphasizes the importance of enhanced international cooperation, and calls upon all States to assist Malawi in the areas of mitigating the effects of natural disasters and disaster prevention and preparedness. In addition, the international community is requested to continue to support Malawi in its efforts to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic, poverty and malnutrition. The draft resolution also requests the Secretar -General to report on the status of the implementation of its provisions during the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

The draft resolution has been the subject of informal and bilateral consultations. I would therefore like to thank all the delegations that actively contributed to the process in order to reach a consensus text.

In addition to the list of sponsors that appears in the draft resolution, the following delegations have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Mauritania and Norway.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have just been informed that the sponsors of draft resolution A/58/L.33 have requested that the introduction of that draft be deferred to Tuesday, 9 December.

I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco to introduce draft resolution A/58/L.34, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Bouchaara (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour and a privilege for the Kingdom of Morocco to introduce, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, as well as of all 162 sponsors, draft resolution A/58/L.34, entitled "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development". One aspect of this draft resolution deserves particular mention. Although it was originally submitted by the Group of 77 and beyond the Group of 77, and many China, it soon became obvious during informal consultations that the international consensus on the draft extended delegations belonging to various groups expressed a wish to support — and a significant number to sponsor — the draft resolution.

In addition to the countries mentioned in the document, the following States are also sponsors of draft resolution A/58/L.34: the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Monaco, Poland, the Republic of Moldova, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

It is particularly encouraging that, throughout this session, international consensus on the draft resolution has been consolidated once again, and even furthered. I would like, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, to

thank all delegations members of the various groups for their support and their sponsorship.

Growing support for the draft resolution can be summed up in a number of observations, the first of which relates to the nature of the subject. Because of their scope, intensity and frequency, and the dramatic consequences that they have, natural disasters affect all the people of the Earth. Of course, vulnerable countries, which often lack effective means of mitigating the long-term repercussions of these disasters at the social, economic and ecological levels, are the worst affected. It is also true, however, that countries with significant levels of development and industrialization have not been spared the consequences of such disasters. We have witnessed, therefore, both a growing collective awareness of the need to work together on prevention and to limit the consequences of natural disasters when they do take place, as well as to urgently bolster international cooperation in this sphere.

That is why the draft resolution submitted today to the General Assembly today reiterates the need to strengthen international cooperation in the provision of humanitarian assistance at all stages of a disaster, from relief to development, in particular through the proper use of multilateral mechanisms and the provision of adequate resources.

As the draft resolution makes clear, we must work to achieve greater international cooperation, in particular with United Nations bodies and regional organizations, in order to help developing countries to acquire the capacity to prevent natural disasters, prepare for them and respond to them.

The draft resolution also focuses on prevention strategies, preparation for natural disasters and early-warning systems at the country and regional levels. It also encourages the further use of space-based and ground-based remote-sensing technologies to help to prevent natural disasters and mitigate their effects. The draft resolution also recognizes the role played by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs as the focal point for the entire United Nations system for the promotion and coordination of humanitarian assistance organizations of the United Nations and other partners in the humanitarian fields in the area of natural disasters.

Finally — and this is a particularly important element — the draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to examine ways to further improve the assessment of needs and responses, to enhance the availability of data and to consider recommendations in this respect.

Indeed, the sole purpose of the draft resolution is to improve the capacity of States, in particular developing countries, to prevent, and to respond more effectively to the tragic consequences of natural disasters. It is our purpose — and our duty — to help save lives. The central issue is the question posed by Diderot: what do we owe each other? This message of brotherhood, international solidarity and respect for others must be at the heart of our humanitarian assistance activities. That is the message that I want to convey today.

I cannot conclude without warmly thanking the delegation of India, in particular Mr. Bhagwant Bishnoi, who, this year as every year, has acted as a skilful and enthusiastic facilitator of the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

On behalf of the sponsors, I appeal for the draft resolution to be adopted by consensus, as in previous years.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/58/L.22, A/58/L.34 and A/58/L.35.

We will turn first to A/58/L.22, entitled "Emergency humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia".

I should like to announce that, since the introduction of draft resolution A/58/L.22, the following countries have become sponsors: Argentina, Finland, Italy and Malaysia.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/58/L.22?

Draft resolution A/58/L.22 was adopted (resolution 58/24).

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): Draft resolution A//58/L.34 is entitled "International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development".

Since the introduction of draft resolution A/58/L.34, the following countries have become sponsors: Estonia, Norway, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/58/L.34?

Draft resolution A/58/L.34 was adopted (resolution 58/25).

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): Draft resolution A/58/L.35 is entitled "Emergency humanitarian assistance to Malawi".

Since the introduction of draft resolution A/58/L.35, the following countries have become sponsors: Italy, Kenya, Madagascar and Togo.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to adopt A/58/L.35?

Draft resolution A/58/L.35 was adopted (resolution 58/26).

Mrs. Zewdie (Ethiopia): The adoption by consensus of the resolution "Emergency humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia" for the second time in the General Assembly is a reflection of the reaffirmation of commitment of the international community to fight humanitarian crises collectively. This year's resolution draws the attention of the international community to the programme of coalition for food security in Ethiopia with the ambitious objective of breaking the cycle of aid dependence within three to five years.

Lifting a food-insecure and vulnerable population of 50 million out of poverty within three to five years would indeed be a daunting task, requiring the commitment of all stakeholders. The Government demonstrated its commitment for the programme by increasing the budget allocated for food security by 50 per cent this year. The response of the international community during their conference, held three days ago in Addis Ababa to find a lasting solution for the drought problem, has been encouraging. It is our sincere hope that the international community's valuable support will be with us in the full realization of this programme.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the African Group and all those who have shown their cooperation by joining the sponsorship of the resolution. In the same vain, I would like to extend our gratitude to Italy in its capacity as the President of the European Union, United States of America, Japan, India and Canada for their constructive contributions during our bilateral consultations. I would also like to express my thanks to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance for its support, and His Excellency Mr. Jean-Marc Hoscheit, the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg, for the able leadership he had demonstrated in coordinating the process of the resolution.

My country looks forward to the full implementation of this resolution.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly has concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-items (a), (b) and (c) of agenda item 40.

It was so decided.

Agenda item 35

Consequences of the Iraqi occupation of and aggression against Kuwait

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-ninth session?

It was so decided (decision 58/513).

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): This concludes our consideration of agenda item 35.

Agenda item 28

The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Agenda item 40

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(f) Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General (A/58/616)

Draft resolution (A/58/L.32)

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly will consider these items in a joint debate. I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Kelley (Director, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs Division): I should like to advise members of the General Assembly that the report of the Secretary-General on these items, under the symbol A/58/616, will be made available in all languages during the course of our debate today and will be distributed to you as they become available. The reason for the delay in its issuance is due to the fact that the Security Council mission to Afghanistan returned to Headquarters on 7 November. The mission's finding formed a critical input to the Secretary-General's report and thus was finalized only in the last few days. The Secretariat mobilized additional human resources during these past two days so as to ensure that the report becomes available in all languages during our debate today.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I call on the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/58/L.32.

Mr. Pleuger (Germany): I have the honour to introduce this year's draft resolution on Afghanistan under items 28 and 40 (f) of the agenda of the General Assembly. Please allow me to underscore from the outset that Germany fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union, which will later be presented by Italy as the presidency of the European Union.

The date for the discussion and adoption of this year's Afghanistan resolution coincides with the second anniversary of the Bonn Agreement. Two years ago, the Afghans took their future into their own hands, seized an historic opportunity, ended a cycle of brutal civil war and poverty, and concluded the Bonn Agreement. This Agreement paved the way for a new start for Afghanistan for a better future which holds the prospect of political stability, economic reconstruction and peaceful development.

In the last two years, the Afghan Government, with the support of the international community, has made significant progress in implementing the Bonn Agreement and recovering from the devastation caused by more than two decades of war. After the adoption of last year's resolution, further progress was achieved in various areas, including the development of a comprehensive national budget, the publication of a draft text for a constitution, the beginning of the disarmament demobilization and reintegration process, and the first steps in the formation of a national army and a national police. This is a clear sign of increased Afghan ownership, which we welcome wholeheartedly.

At the same time, much remains to be done. Having led the Security Council mission to Afghanistan, and having gained a personal impression of the situation on the ground, I think it is right to say that we are at a critical juncture in the socio-economic and political reconstruction of this country. Germany sees currently four fundamental areas which need to be tackled immediately by the Afghan Government and with the largest possible support by the international community if we want to avoid putting at risk the full implementation of the Bonn process. First, the representativeness of the Government needs to be increased — in particular in the security institutions — and efforts to promote national unity and reconciliation have to be strengthened. Secondly, security countrywide, which is currently deteriorating owing to terrorist activities, factional fighting and drug-related crime, has to be improved and the authority of the central Government must be extended. Thirdly, the pace of reconstruction and the provision of the necessary financial resources has to be accelerated. And fourthly, the efforts of the Transitional Administration to eliminate illicit poppy cultivation, trafficking in drugs and their precursors and to improve law enforcement, crop substitution and other alternative livelihood and development programmes in Afghanistan have to be maintained and intensified.

All of those areas are interlinked. Each of them has the potential, not only to adversely affect the prospect of political stability, economic reconstruction and peaceful development in Afghanistan, but also to substantially jeopardize those processes. Therefore, none of those areas can be neglected at the expense of the others. All of those priority areas require simultaneous commitment and action by the Afghan Government, as well as enhanced support by the international community and Afghanistan's neighbours.

This year's draft resolution, A/58/L.32, which I have the honour to present today, renews that message to the Afghan people, to its neighbouring States and to the international community. It has been jointly drafted by many delegations in a spirit of support for the people and Government of Afghanistan. The large

number of sponsors — more than 130 of them — is yet another sign that despite crises in other regions of the world, Afghanistan remains at the top of the international community's list of priorities. It is a strong signal of the continued support of the United Nations for the Afghan people and for the Transitional Administration in Kabul.

Let me quickly highlight some of the key aspects of the new text. First, this year's draft resolution had to incorporate the political developments in Afghanistan that have occurred over the past 12 months. It also takes into account the findings of the recent Security Council mission to Afghanistan. It welcomes the positive developments taking place in Afghanistan, spells out the major challenges lying ahead and addresses the responsibilities of the main parties inside as well as outside of Afghanistan. It welcomes the recent expansion of the International Security Assistance Force mandate, in accordance with the Bonn Agreement, as well as the progressive establishment of Provincial Reconstruction Teams in various parts of Afghanistan.

Additionally, the draft resolution reaffirms the central role of the United Nations in international assistance efforts, calls for continued international support for the Transitional Administration in the implementation of the Bonn Agreement and endorses its priorities. The draft also emphasizes, however, that the main responsibility for a sustainable political solution lies with the Afghan people themselves. Unless all Afghan groups respect the authority of the Transitional Administration and cooperate fully to implement the Bonn Agreement, a lasting peace cannot be obtained.

The draft resolution further reflects the progress that has been achieved in the humanitarian field, in particular, with regard to the implementation of relief and reconstruction programmes. Unfortunately, achievements in that field have been overshadowed by a series of lethal terrorist attacks on humanitarian personnel throughout the country, resulting in the withdrawal of various non-governmental organizations from Afghanistan or from certain regions of the country, with a consequent significant slowdown of relief or development work. In order to address that changed environment, the draft resolution has a greater focus on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and on the question of sufficient access by them to all parts of the country.

The draft resolution retains its strong emphasis on human rights and on the improvement of the situation of women and children, in particular, that of girls. In that regard, my Government welcomes Afghanistan's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. We hope that that ratification will form the basis for gradual progress in that area.

The draft resolution also highlights the continued influx of large numbers of refugees and of internally displaced persons seeking to return to their places of origin. That migration is an additional burden on the Transitional Administration and needs to be managed in a comprehensive and sustainable way. By June 2003, the total number of those repatriated had already surpassed 2 million. My Government commends the efforts undertaken by the Transitional Administration, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator in that regard.

For many years now, Germany has felt a special commitment to aid Afghanistan, bilaterally as well as within the United Nations. That builds on a long-standing tradition of exchange between the Afghan and German peoples in the cultural and academic sectors. The German commitment embraced from the beginning many projects, inter alia, in the spheres of education and human rights. Germany also took the lead role in setting up the new Afghan police force. Additionally, Germany has recently extended its civil and military engagement in Afghanistan. In the context of the Security Council decision to expand the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) beyond Kabul, the German Government decided to expand its presence in Afghanistan to the Herat region in the west and to the region around Kunduz in the north of the country. On 1 December 2003 a German civilian component commenced operations from our Embassy's new branch office in Herat. Since 25 October 2003, work has been under way to establish a German ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Kunduz, which, by the end of this year, will become a German-led NATO pilot PRT project.

By formally expanding our civilian presence beyond Kabul and its surrounding areas, we hope to help Afghanistan break out of the vicious circle with a lack of security in turn hindering progress in the political, economic and humanitarian reconstruction

effort. We would welcome any military or civilian participation by interested partners in either the ISAF pilot project in Kunduz or the purely civilian German component in Herat.

Germany believes that that strategy is the best way to ensure long-term stability, by facilitating reconstruction efforts throughout the country and by providing a secure environment for the constitutional process and electoral preparations. We strongly hope that other nations will establish additional PRTs in the near future. It is our view, however, that those efforts should be complemented by a reaffirmation of the commitment of the international community to promote the political and economic reconstruction of Afghanistan.

I renew in this regard my appeal to all Member States to fulfil the commitments they made at Tokyo in 2002 and reiterated at Dubai in September of this year, and to contribute substantially to the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund, to the Law and Order Trust Fund and to the Afghan National Development Framework.

Furthermore, Germany is of the view that the international community should seriously consider the possibility of a follow-up conference to the Bonn process and of a donor conference, as suggested by President Karzai. In Afghanistan, the conditions necessary for a credible national political process are not yet in place. It is becoming more and more evident that not all core outcomes intended by Bonn can actually be achieved by mid-2004. We believe that a systematic review of the Bonn Agenda and the elaboration of future benchmarks for the political process should be undertaken soon, in order to generate the necessary financial resources in time and to avoid a political vacuum after June 2004.

I would like to stress the key role of the United Nations in this context. The United Nations is, and will remain, the key body in aiding and supporting our Afghan friends in rebuilding their society, their economy and their country. The United Nations has assumed these tasks admirably. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General; his Special Representative, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi; and the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan for their tireless efforts.

I am sure that I speak on behalf of all of us in this regard when I say that we owe sincere and deep gratitude to Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi for his exceptional leadership and for the very valuable role he has played throughout the process. We wish him all the best for the future.

Germany will continue consistently to support the efforts of the United Nations in this area with all the means at its disposal. We hope jointly to achieve the goal of a peaceful and free Afghanistan that will play its part in ensuring the region's long-term stability.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to all Member States willing to sponsor this draft resolution and would appreciate it very much if we could adopt it — as in the past — by consensus.

Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan): The fifth of December is an important date in the recent history of Afghanistan. Two years ago, on this date, Afghan political groups succeeded in establishing a political road map by signing an Agreement in Bonn, Germany. Today, with great satisfaction, we are celebrating the signing of the Agreement.

Despite enormous challenges, the Afghan Government has been able to meet the benchmarks set by that Agreement. A brief look back at the events of the past two years shows that the political actors have been committed to implementing the Bonn Agreement.

Immediately after the signing of the Bonn Agreement, the Afghan Interim Authority was established. The Interim Authority governed the country until the convening of the emergency Loya Jirga — the great assembly — in June 2002. The broad-based Transitional Authority approved by that emergency Loya Jirga could be considered the most representative Government the recent history of Afghanistan. In Afghanist. ethnic group has an absolute majority. No et group is ignored, underrepresented or alienated in the Government. While Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic nation, all the groups have a common history marked by patriotism. The Transitional Authority will govern until national elections are held in 2004.

In the past two years, major achievements have been made and positive developments have taken place in Afghanistan. They include the following: the return of a large number of refugees to the country, and the return of many internally displaced persons to their places of origin; the successful implementation of the back-to-school programme; efforts aimed at the

restoration of the human rights of women, including their participation in the political, civil, economic and social life of the country; the introduction of the new Afghan currency; the development of a comprehensive national development budget; and the beginning of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process (DDR) of the former combatants.

Finally, the most recent major accomplishment has been the release of the draft Constitution of Afghanistan, which has generated a lively national debate among different sections of Afghan society.

Despite those positive achievements, Afghanistan still faces many challenges. The pace of reconstruction and rehabilitation is not satisfactory, as the Security Council mission to Afghanistan rightly reported. There is an increasing frustration among Afghans about the lack of a peace dividend and of tangible benefits.

The cultivation, production and illicit trafficking of drugs is another major problem faced by the Afghan Government. Unfortunately, poverty and deprivation have pushed thousands of farmers into the cultivation of the lucrative poppy crop. That challenge requires a multidimensional and comprehensive plan that takes into account both consumers and producers. We are of the view that the economic development of Afghanistan, and particularly the development of sustainable and gainful alternative livelihoods, will have a positive impact on reducing poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. Sustained international assistance is also required in this field.

We firmly believe that a strong international commitment to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan should produce visible achievements, thereby considerably enhancing the authority and credibility of the Afghan Government. Such progress is key to political stability.

The lack of security in some parts of Afghanistan is another challenge that the Afghan Government is facing. In that regard, we are thankful to Ambassador Gunter Pleuger of Germany and to all members of the Security Council for their recent visit to Afghanistan and for having highlighted that challenge in their report to the Security Council. That report (S/2003/1704), regarding the Security Council mission to Afghanistan, covered different aspects of the political, economic and social life of the country. It also underlines the cross-border infiltration of terrorists from neighbouring countries to Afghanistan and their subversive activities in the south, south-east and east of Afghanistan. As pointed out in the report, those terrorist acts are considered a significant threat to the Afghan Government and the international assistance community.

Some incidents of insecurity, and clashes between some local leaders and commanders have also occurred in other parts of the country. Recently, the Afghan Government has taken strong measures to prevent the occurrence of such incidents. However, those local leaders and commanders have reaffirmed their allegiance to the Government. They have been part of the political process initiated after the Bonn Agreement, participated in the emergency Loya Jirga in June 2002 and are currently politically active in the national debate on the new draft constitution. At a later stage, they will be active in the presidential election of 2004.

The reality is that the insecurity from the east, south-east, and south of the country has ideological and political foundations with the international terrorist network, and not from the so-called ethnic divisions within Afghanistan. Analysts have often overlooked that fact. The insecurity in the border area of Afghanistan is not due to the alienation, frustration or lower status of any ethnic group in Afghanistan; it is a deliberate policy of religiously motivated extremist groups, who have nostalgia for the Taliban. Those groups challenge the authority and legitimacy of President Karzai and launch attacks against the ISAF and the coalition forces and personnel of the international assistance community. Many non-Afghans are involved in those subversive acts.

There is no connection between the burning of girls' schools or the killing of aid workers and the so-called ethnic claims falsely portrayed by some poorly informed analysts. Recruitment of fighters and fund-raising, with the explicit or implicit consent of the local authorities of our neighbour to the south, is now self-evident.

As already observed, Afghanistan continues to face a national security challenge from the remnants of the Taliban-Al Qaeda groups who fled to their sanctuaries across our borders to the south and south-east and are now trying to regroup and disrupt peace and security and the lives of our people. That threat must be eliminated with the help of our partners and

the meaningful and resolute cooperation of the Pakistani Government.

We believe that an overwhelming number of the people of Pakistan, like the Afghans, do not want their lives to be taken hostage by terrorists and extremists, who misrepresent their faith and aspirations by opposing peace and progress. In this regard, it is important to acknowledge the recent tripartite commission meetings and the progress achieved with the common goal of fighting against terrorism.

Afghanistan is thankful to the international community and to the non-governmental organizations for their sustained support towards the country's reconstruction process. Security in Afghanistan requires the launching of major- and medium-sized reconstruction projects that would provide an alternative livelihood for former combatants.

Before concluding, I would like to mention some pertinent points. There was an agreement on the principle of extending the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) outside the capital, Kabul. Moreover, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in its first ever mission outside Europe, took over the command of ISAF forces outside the capital, subsequent to negotiations with the Afghan authorities. By now, concrete action has begun in which NATO's German units have dispatched provincial reconstruction teams in the northern town of Kunduz. Civilian experts are part of those units assisting Afghanistan in diverse reconstruction fields and are welcomed by the local administrations and population. We hope that pilot project will be extended to other urban centres of the country.

Let me conclude by expressing our sincere gratitude to the German Mission and Ambassador Gunter Pleuger and his colleagues, particularly Mr. Seidenberger and Mr. Kuechle, for their valuable and tireless efforts in the coordination and drafting of the draft resolution on Afghanistan presented to the General Assembly. I hope that draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the associated countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey and the EFTA Country Iceland align themselves with this statement.

Two years have passed since the signing of the Bonn Agreement. Since then, several critical steps for its implementation have been made. The European Union takes note of the significant progress made in many areas over recent months. Particularly, we welcome the strides made in the reconstruction process, as well as the return of large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons.

The European Union welcomes the recent publication of the draft constitution. With regard to the Constitutional Loya Jirga, the European Union expects to see a democratic and fair completion of that important traditional Afghan consultation. The European Union hopes that it will approve a constitution in step with international standards and based on the primacy of international law, democratic principles, and respect for human rights, including gender equality and social justice.

Notwithstanding that progress, major challenges lie ahead and much remains to be done. In today's discussion we should look forward and focus on what needs to be done to overcome the obstacles still blocking full implementation of the Bonn Agreement.

In this context, the recent mission of the Security Council to Afghanistan has confirmed that the lack of security in many areas of the country, caused by terrorism, factional fighting and drug trafficking, is still a major concern. The lack of security is significantly affecting the political and reconstruction processes, especially in the south and south-east regions.

The European Union welcomes the recent Security Council resolution 1510 (2003), authorizing the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission to operate outside the area of Kabul, and it encourages further efforts by Member States to establish or contribute to provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs). The European Union also recalls the importance of security sector reform, including the reconstitution of the new Afghan national army and police, as well as justice reform. In this regard, we welcome the progress achieved so far under the impetus of the lead nations. In the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration area, the European Union recalls the steps taken to reform the Ministry of Defence, and it invites the Afghan transitional administration to complete the reform process, ensuring that the Ministry becomes truly representative

of all Afghans, and to extend this process of reform to other institutions.

The European Union is greatly concerned about poppy cultivation and illicit drug production and trafficking in Afghanistan. Cultivation in traditional areas has decreased, but it has moved into new regions. As a result, the overall area of cultivation increased by 8 per cent, from 74,000 hectares in 2002 to 80,000 hectares in 2003. There was little effective law enforcement. The European Union welcomes the Afghan national drug control strategy as the first step to tackling the problem. It reaffirms its readiness to assist in its implementation with the aim of eliminating illicit poppy cultivation, including by offering crop substitution and other alternative livelihood and development programmes. The European Union will also support the fight against illicit trafficking of drugs within Afghanistan, in neighbouring countries along trafficking routes, including through increased cooperation with them to strengthen counter-narcotic controls.

A key step in the implementation of the Bonn process is the preparation for elections. We reiterate the need for free and fair elections to be held next year. The European Union and its member States have pledged considerable assistance to Afghanistan in preparing for those elections. We must recognize that the present situation of insecurity in certain areas constitutes an additional obstacle in respecting the time frame provided for in the Bonn Agreement. Given the risks that a prolonged delay could involve, we underline the importance of credible general elections taking place as soon as possible.

The European Union stresses the importance of the coordination of donor resources by the transitional administration in conjunction with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, which has allowed United Nations agencies and other donors to make the best use of their resources. The European Union has responded with large-scale assistance to the humanitarian and reconstruction needs existing in Afghanistan. We remain strongly committed to providing the necessary humanitarian assistance and to delivering a substantial contribution to the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

The efforts and the assistance of the international community should contribute to further enhancing the authority of the transitional administration and the Afghan people's ownership in consolidating peace in Afghanistan and in rebuilding their country and its institutions.

The human rights situation has improved, but much more remains to be done, in particular with respect to women's rights. The Bonn Agreement committed the transitional authority to ensuring respect for human rights, yet we remain concerned about reports of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in some parts of the country.

Restoring overall security and lasting peace in Afghanistan is impossible without the contribution of neighbouring countries. The European Union is well aware of the importance of regional cooperation and integration in securing peace among nations. Therefore, we call on Afghanistan's neighbours to fully implement the Kabul Declaration on Good Neighbourly Relations of 22 December 2002. In this regard, we welcome the recent signing of the TTI agreement in Dubai in September 2003.

The European Union has been fully committed to and involved in the reconstruction of Afghanistan since 2001. We are ready to reaffirm our commitment to the socio-political and economic rebuilding of the country. After two years, it is important not to lose the momentum for peace and security in Afghanistan. To this end, we should seriously consider the Afghan President's wish to convene a follow-up conference next year, following the conclusion of the Constitutional Loya Jirga.

Mr. Ullah (Pakistan): We are considering the situation in Afghanistan on this day, the second anniversary of the historic Bonn Agreement. Pakistan attaches great importance to this Agreement, which has set in motion a process for the rebuilding of political institutions and the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. Pakistan has worked closely with the international community in the implementation of the Bonn Agreement.

Afghanistan has reached a crucial stage in the implementation of the Bonn process. The constitutional process is underway, as are preparations for elections next year. While there has been progress in the political process and in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan, these cannot be achieved in the absence of security. The deteriorating security situation threatens stability, not just in southern and south-eastern Afghanistan, but throughout the country,

creates hurdles in Afghanistan's path to recovery and development and, above all, seeks to undermine and derail the Bonn process itself.

Afghanistan's worsening security situation has been comprehensively analysed in the report of the recent Security Council mission to Afghanistan (S/2003/1074). As identified in the report, the main factors contributing to deterioration in Afghanistan's security situation are: first, the activities of the Taliban and other extremists; secondly, the arbitrary control exercised by local commanders and warlords; and thirdly, illicit drug production and trafficking. Among the key concrete recommendations proposed in the report are the withdrawal of all factional forces from Kabul in accordance with the provisions of the Bonn Agreement; reforms in Afghanistan's security sector including in the Afghan national army, police, Ministry of Defence and intelligence services; and the initiation of a process of national reconciliation directed at all Afghans willing to help rebuild the country, irrespective of past events, in order to strengthen the central Government and the basic institutions of the State. These are the essential prerequisites for reversing the alarming security situation in Afghanistan.

Pakistan welcomes the recent decision by NATO to expand the presence of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) outside Kabul. While that is no doubt a step in the right direction, piecemeal and modest deployments will not create a secure environment in Afghanistan. What is needed is the rapid and massive expansion of ISAF and deployment of its contingents throughout Afghanistan. That is the essential requirement in order to stabilize the country, assist in the extension of the central Government's authority and ensure the fair, impartial and verifiable disarmament and demobilization of all of Afghanistan's warring factions.

Additionally, there is a need to tackle the serious drug problem in Afghanistan that is both a symptom and a cause of the instability in that country. All the armed factions in Afghanistan — including the warlords and the Taliban — are profiting from the illicit traffic in narcotic drugs. Moreover, as those groups are all benefiting from that trade, it is also in their interest to perpetuate it.

Pakistan recognizes the serious threat posed to Afghanistan's security by the resurgence of extremist forces — including the Taliban — in eastern and southern Afghanistan. That is a symptom of a deeper problem that is directly linked to Pashtoon alienation and the rising power of the warlords. The following truths must be recognized: first, not every angry Pashtoon is a member of the Taliban, and secondly, there is no warlord in Afghanistan who is serving anybody's interest except his own. The chaos, corruption and criminal activities being perpetuated once again by both major and minor warlords in Afghanistan is recreating the situation that existed in Afghanistan in 1992-1993. It was that chaos, corruption, and banditry which generated popular support for the Taliban. In the absence of security, law and order, people in villages and towns are once again turning to religious leaders and extremists. Some of these elements are associated with the Taliban; others are not.

For its own part, Pakistan will not allow any group or entity to use its soil for acts of terrorism in Afghanistan. Given our role in ousting the Taliban following the tragic events of 11 September 2001, Pakistan would not like to see their revival and return to power in Afghanistan. Pakistan is cooperating with the United States and Afghanistan in strengthening security along our western borders through the Trilateral Commission. In its last meeting, held on 2 December, the three sides agreed to establish a subcommittee on military information exchange and coordination to develop a common operational picture of the terrorist threat in the border regions. That measure will significantly enhance the military capabilities of all three parties in the war against terrorism. The joint communiqué issued after the meeting referred to a renewed mutual commitment of the three countries to increase strategic cooperation to counter the terrorist threat.

For the first time in its history, Pakistan has deployed 70,000 troops along its difficult, porous and inhospitable 2,500 kilometre border with Afghanistan. In addition, we have taken proactive measures in border areas, including the formation and deployment of an elite rapid reaction force, greater intelligence gathering, construction of a 30-kilometre fence in key areas along the border and the installation of searchlights and floodlights in various locations. Our troops have orders to kill suspected Taliban and Al Qaeda infiltrators or exfiltrators on sight.

We are carrying out our anti-terrorism operations at great human, material and political cost. We have thus far conducted over 150 such operations and have captured over 500 Al Qaeda and Taliban elements. We have lost 25 soldiers and policemen in that process. No other country has scored so many successes against Al Qaeda and Taliban remnants and — with very few exceptions — hardly any other country has paid so high a price.

Rather than seeking to shift the blame for the growing insecurity, the time has come to stop the blame game and to address the real security threats that remain inside Afghanistan. Serious decisions must be taken, starting with the demilitarization of Kabul. There can be no successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of all the armed factions as long it is perceived that the capital remains under the control of warlords and factions in defiance of the Bonn Agreement.

Pakistan remains committed to its obligations under the Kabul Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations, signed on 22 December last year. There is no country that wants peace and stability in Afghanistan more than Pakistan, and no country stands to suffer more from instability in Afghanistan than Pakistan. Pakistan stands by its commitment to fight the terrorist threat in Afghanistan. At the same time, let me affirm that Pakistan will not tolerate the use of Afghan soil by third parties to carry out terrorist attacks against Afghanistan's immediate neighbours.

Earlier this year, President Musharraf told a visiting Afghan Minister that Pakistan would continue to strive for a peaceful and stable neighbourhood with a view to creating an environment for collective development and prosperity. That is our aim in Afghanistan and in the region. We value, therefore, the signing in Doha of the Trade, Transit and Investment Declaration, in furtherance of the Kabul Declaration. Pakistan would also like to see a greater integration of Afghanistan into regional economic cooperation structures. In that regard, we strongly support the gas pipeline project connecting Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. We also welcome all other initiatives aimed at economically integrating Afghanistan with its neighbours.

At the Tokyo Conference, Pakistan pledged $100 million over a five-year period towards Afghanistan's reconstruction efforts. That assistance is being directed to areas identified by the Afghan Government and is channelled through its authority. A fact sheet containing the details of our assistance has been issued. In addition, we have extended further transit trade facilities to Afghanistan, including the removal of several items from the prohibited list, the simplification of customs procedures and a 25 to 30 per cent reduction in transportation costs and freight charges. We have offered Afghanistan expanded facilities at our new south-western port of Gwadar. Moreover, Pakistan is seriously considering ways to provide electricity to the southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan, as requested by the Afghan Government. Pakistan is also working with the Afghan Government to explore possibilities for private sector cooperation and investment opportunities, particularly in the areas of cement, pharmaceuticals and consumer goods.

In addition to assistance in relief and reconstruction, Pakistan has provided arms, ammunition and equipment for the Afghan National Army and training for the Army and Afghan police.

The first batch of Afghan diplomats recently completed their training at our Foreign Service Academy. We are also offering assistance in counter-narcotics and working with the Afghan authorities to strengthen border controls. Pakistan will continue to offer its fullest support to the Afghan Transitional Authority in all of its efforts aimed at peace, security, reconstruction, and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. These are as important for Pakistan as they are for Afghanistan.

Over the last two decades, Pakistan has hosted millions of Afghan refugees, largely without appreciable assistance from the international community. We are pleased with the voluntary repatriation of a number of these refugees. However, we remain concerned over the slowing down of the repatriation process because of insecurity in Afghanistan and the lack of adequate economic activity for the returnees. We hope that the international community will target some of its recovery and reconstruction assistance for rural areas, from which most of the refugees originate. This would ensure that those who return home will have a reason to remain there.

In addition, we hope that the millions of Afghan refugees who remain in Pakistan and Iran will not be excluded from the historical constitutional and election

process in Afghanistan. We hope that these refugees, who still account for almost 10 per cent of Afghanistan's population, will be accorded commensurate representation in Afghanistan's future parliament.

Finally, I wish to reiterate Pakistan's full and unequivocal support for the Bonn process and President Hamid Karzai's Government. Pakistan supports Mr. Karzai's efforts aimed at national reconciliation and the reconstruction of his country. There can be no doubt that a strong, stable and prosperous Afghanistan is in the interest of Pakistan. Pakistan will spare no effort to achieve that goal. We reaffirm our resolve to work with the international community to promote peace, stability, reconstruction and economic development in Afghanistan.

Mr. Løvald (Norway): Today, two years have passed since the signing of the Bonn Agreement. Much has been achieved. The process of a developing and a democratic society has started. A serious humanitarian crisis has been avoided. Reconstruction is under way.

However, Afghanistan is at a critical juncture. The political and reconstruction agendas ahead are heavy, but manageable if the security situation does not block the way. Afghanistan's future depends on the three pillars of security, political process and reconstruction. It is vital to continue implementing the political objectives of the Bonn Agreement, a process that will culminate in the elections in 2004.

We have a common responsibility to ensure that the situation in Afghanistan is not overshadowed by other conflicts. Long-term commitment from the international community is of vital importance for peace and development in Afghanistan and the region.

A stable security situation is essential if Afghanistan is to succeed in holding fair elections. Norway welcomes Security Council resolution 1510 (2003) to expand the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mandate under the leadership of NATO. ISAF has a crucial role to play in securing stability in Kabul and other parts of the country. The challenge now is to live up to the expectations of the Afghan people in restoring a sustainable peace. Norway is making a substantial contribution to ISAF. Due to the need for increased security during the Constitutional Loya Jirga, Norway has recently deployed a company of some 200 personnel.

However, extending security to the provinces is key if the peace process is to become irreversible. The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) concept might be a way forward in facilitating dialogue between the Afghan Transitional Authority and regional leaders and by assisting and monitoring implementation of security sector reform. Norway is at the moment looking into possible contributions to the PRTs.

The fragile security situation underscores the need for a multiethnic national army, a police force under civilian control and functioning justice system. We urge the Afghan Transitional Authority to complete the reform of the Ministry of the Defence, which are essential if the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process is going to succeed. Factional leaders must come under the control of the central Government. While Afghan ownership is essential, the international community must provide long-term substantial support to security sector reforms.

The increasing number of attacks on humanitarian aid workers and United Nations staff — the majority of them Afghans — are unacceptable. When United Nations and humanitarian personnel are seen as targets in conflicts, we are faced with serious problems. A concerted effort is needed to reverse a trend that runs counter to the most basic tenets of international humanitarian law and raises fundamental questions that need to be addressed on an urgent basis.

In Afghanistan, both the United Nations and non-governmental organizations have raised concerns about the mixing of military and civilian roles. This complex issue requires careful scrutiny and underscores the importance of defining roles in fragile post-conflict situations.

Special Representative Brahimi must be commended for his tireless efforts. Norway fully supports the concepts of an integrated United Nations mission and a light international footprint.

The United Nations must have a key role in preparing the elections for next year. It is of vital importance that the forthcoming Constitutional Loya Jirga and the elections add legitimacy to the political process and contribute to unifying the various factions of Afghan society. Therefore, the Afghan Transitional Authority should initiate a process of national reconciliation directed at all Afghans.

Norway welcomes the progress made in the human rights field, including the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) without reservations and the work of the Human Rights Commission of Afghanistan. However, more remains to be done. The main responsibility for addressing human rights issues lies with the Afghan Transitional Authority. The serious security situation aggravates human rights conditions in many parts of the country. Women are still the main victims. Their access to public life is still limited and their lives and dignity are still threatened. Norway is ready to work as a partner with Afghanistan in the implementation of the CEDAW.

The expanding drug economy is a serious threat, not only in Afghanistan, but in the region as a whole. If the producers and traffickers are allowed to thrive, the consequences will be devastating far beyond the borders of Afghanistan, including in many of our own societies. This will increase political instability and hamper sustainable economic growth, while strengthening the culture of corruption. Norway welcomes the Afghan National Drug Control Strategy. There is a need for a multidimensional approach, by both taking into account alternative livelihoods programmes and strengthening law enforcement.

Long-term reconstruction and socio-economic development are key challenges. The donor community must deliver to make the peace process irreversible. There is an increasing frustration among the Afghan people regarding the lack of peace dividends, in particular in the provinces.

Norway welcomes the Afghan development budget presented this year. It clearly reflects Afghan ownership. We urge the Afghan Transitional Authority to fully integrate women's issues and provide Afghan children with educational and health facilities in all parts of the country, recognizing the special needs of girls. Afghanistan is one of the major recipients of Norwegian development assistance and humanitarian aid. All the assistance allocated for 2003, approximately $50 million, has already been disbursed. Next year, pending parliamentary approval, Afghanistan will be designated one of our long-term partner countries in development cooperation.

Norway is a strong supporter of joint financing mechanisms such as the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) for strengthening Afghan ownership and transparency and ensuring the functioning of basic state institutions. Afghan leadership can only be supported through strengthening Government, not by sidelining it. We have therefore channelled a substantial part of our assistance to ARTF and we urge other donors to follow suit.

Nevertheless, continued international assistance is dependent upon Afghan commitment to the Bonn process. The main responsibility for finding a lasting political solution lies with the Afghan people. It is important not to lose momentum. We should therefore seriously consider President Karzai's wish to convene a follow-up conference to the Bonn process.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Bangladesh congratulates the Afghan Transitional Authority headed by President Hamid Karzai for its tireless efforts to fulfil its mandate under the Bonn Agreement. We also praise the brave and resilient Afghan people, who seized the opportunity to rebuild their nation. From all walks of life, they have journeyed far to take ownership of the peace process agreed in Bonn. We hail them for taking yet another major step forward on the road to democracy and pluralism by drafting a national constitution. As we speak today, Afghanis all over the country are registering as voters in preparation for the 2004 general elections.

We are also particularly heartened to see that Afghan children — girls and boys — have gone back to school. More than 2 million Afghan refugees have returned home and are integrating into the mainstream of society. After decades of marginalization, Afghan women are actively participating in the transitional political process and in the drafting of the constitution. We welcome Afghanistan's decision to become a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and also to one of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A national human rights commission and a judicial reform commission are in full operation. The newly formed Afghan National Army, police force and border patrol guards are deployed and functioning. Those are important institutional steps forward in promoting and protecting human rights, strengthening the rule of law and consolidating national sovereignty. The hope for a better, more peaceful and prosperous future is clearly on the horizon.

Yet there is no room for complacency. The hard-earned peace and stability in Afghanistan remain fragile and at great risk. The people of Afghanistan yearn for total security so that they may enjoy the dividends of peace, but the relentless jockeying for power, factional fighting and illegal drug trade must first be halted if national reconciliation and unity is to evolve. We urge Afghans to stop their in-fighting. They must cooperate with the international community in its endeavour, which will bring solace and succour to their future generations. No nation has deserved such blessings more.

The safety of United Nations and associated personnel is of paramount importance. It is a prerequisite for humanitarian aid to reach the Afghan people, for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and demining to be carried out and for reconstruction and development to take place. The brutal killing of Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees personnel from France and many more from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) cannot be and must not be condoned.

We welcome the expansion by the Security Council of the mandate of ISAF beyond Kabul. It was timely and reassuring for all concerned, most particularly for the Afghan people. So was the recent visit by the Security Council mission to Afghanistan, led by Germany. We commend NATO and many of its member States that have contributed men and material to ISAF. They have displayed great courage and strong leadership.

Bangladesh pays high tribute to the gifted leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi. We laud the invaluable contribution of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to promote peace and stability in that country. The United Nations development and humanitarian team, led by Mr. Mark Malloch Brown also deserves special praise.

We thank all donors and friends of Afghanistan who have come forward to rebuild its institutions, to assist in combating illicit production and trade in drugs and to help millions of Afghan refugees return to their motherland. The United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan and the European Union, among others, deserve special mention in that regard. Commendations are also due to countries of the region, such as Pakistan and Iran, for hosting millions of Afghan refugees.

The people of Bangladesh stand shoulder to shoulder with their traditional Afghan brethren in their quest for peace, stability, democracy and development — despite our many and varied constraints. In January 2002, we dispatched $1 million in emergency assistance to our Afghan friends. But, more importantly, as a vibrant, pluralist democracy of 130 million people, we have shared some of our national social successes with the people of Afghanistan, such as microcredit, non-formal primary education and the empowerment of women. Our non-governmental organizations and civil society have been, albeit quietly and unobtrusively, transmitting to the Afghan people the values that we believe are invaluable to post-conflict developing societies. Such values include, but are not limited to, gender-mainstreaming, food for education of the girl child, economic empowerment of women and health and immunization of the mother and the child. It is our firm conviction that the empowerment of women is crucial to Afghanistan's future and to marginalizing extremist and irrational thought and action.

There must also be a South-South sharing of best practices in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The eight areas identified by the conference on South-South cooperation and reconstruction of Afghanistan, held in New Delhi, should receive the renewed attention of the United Nations and the countries of the South. We would be happy to contribute to that end.

Bangladesh remains convinced that continued, strong and credible international support for the Afghan people and for the Transitional Authority in strengthening the ongoing political, economic and security processes, is a sine qua non for achieving lasting peace and stability in that volatile region. There must be no let-up in the reconstruction efforts and those processes must be inclusive, sustainable and irreversible. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan and the socio-cultural values of the Afghans must be respected if a truly pluralistic, multi-ethnic and representative Afghan society is to evolve through national reconciliation. Afghans and Afghans only must determine their own future. It must be designed, driven and implemented by them.

The people of Afghanistan have suffered far too much for far too long. We must help the Afghans help

themselves. The draft resolutions we have sponsored will, in our view, further the achievement of that goal. We applaud Germany's role in bringing the two draft resolutions to fruition.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): At the outset, my delegation would like to congratulate the Secretary-General and his Special Representative to Afghanistan for the valuable work that has been carried out in respect of Afghanistan despite the complexity of the issue and the difficult conditions encountered there on a daily basis. We also thank the Security Council mission to Afghanistan for its report on the visit carried out from 31 October to 7 November 2003. My delegation finds the report to be very informative and helpful in enhancing our understanding of the situation in Afghanistan.

My delegation finds it quite disturbing that the security situation in many parts of Afghanistan continues to be serious in spite of the ouster of the Taliban regime two years ago. The remnants of the former regime have apparently regrouped and begun to cause problems to the interim Government, the population and the international presence in the country. The group allied to Hekmatyar has also been reported to have caused additional difficulties, especially in areas immediately beyond Kabul. The fact that warlords continue to hold sway in most parts of the country and that the interim Government is only able to project its authority within Kabul and its vicinity should be a matter of continuing concern to the international community.

Security is the most important aspect that needs to be addressed in Afghanistan if the country is to have any reasonable prospect of success in its nation-building efforts, in particular in promoting good governance and undertaking reconstruction efforts. In this regard, security and economic assistance from the international community remains crucial. My delegation fully supports the recommendation of the Security Council mission that the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) be strengthened so that it can be deployed beyond Kabul. The bold action taken by Germany to deploy their troops to Konduz is commendable and should be duplicated elsewhere by other ISAF elements.

My delegation is very much encouraged that in spite of the uncertain security situation, progress has been achieved in many fields in Afghanistan over the past year. In this regard, the efforts undertaken by the interim Government, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and various non-governmental organizations should be commended. We note the serious efforts undertaken by President Karzai and his Government, operating under difficult circumstances. Malaysia had the privilege of welcoming President Karzai twice this year to attend the XIII Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement in Kuala Lumpur in February and the Tenth Session of the Islamic Summit Conference in Putrajaya in October.

The year 2003 has proven to be a significant year for Afghanistan in its efforts to reinstate democracy. The publication of a Draft Constitution, as announced on 9 November 2003, is a most welcomed development and certainly a strong manifestation of the struggle of the Afghan people to effect change and genuinely build strong and credible democratic institutions. Malaysia sincerely hopes that the Loya Jirga will be able to deliberate on the Draft Constitution expeditiously and successfully. We note that work is being undertaken in preparing for nationwide elections next year, although some sections of the population, particularly those of the Pashtun region, may not be able to be fully registered as voters because of the prevailing security situation. This could result in their disenfranchisement and lead to further problems in the future. The current security situation may also impact on the conduct of the elections. Hence, it is imperative that the international community sustain its presence in Afghanistan and maintain assistance to the country.

My delegation hopes that the future elected Government of Afghanistan will have the full capacity to implement its national policies so as to serve the interest of the country's multi-ethnic communities. In addition, priority should be given to enhancing the well-being and advancement of the vulnerable sectors of Afghan society, namely, women and children. Women should be entrusted with key roles. By the same token, children should be provided with adequate access to proper education, health care and nutrition.

Malaysia notes that the drug problem remains a major concern, especially with the resumption of poppy cultivation by Afghan farmers. This situation must be reversed without delay. The farmers must be provided with alternative crops to cultivate that can ensure good returns. Simultaneously, the international community should work in concert to stop the drug lords from

exporting illicit drugs and making them available on the global market and possibly using the proceeds for terrorist activities.

My delegation supports the call for donor countries to continue to make funds available for the reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. We note with satisfaction the outcome of the Conference on Consolidation of Peace: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration in Afghanistan held in Tokyo on 22 February 2003 in support of Afghanistan's initiative through the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process. We welcome the indispensable role played by the donor countries and the United Nations Development Programme in coordinating the DDR initiative. Malaysia stands ready to cooperate in this regard.

In Malaysia's capacity as Chairman of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), my delegation wishes to reiterate the unflinching commitment of Malaysia and the other NAM member States towards Afghanistan, as reflected in the Final Document of the XIII NAM Summit in Kuala Lumpur last February. In this connection, the Movement is resolved to contribute to Afghanistan's reconstruction and rehabilitation process.

There is no doubt that the ongoing efforts in Afghanistan will be a difficult and challenging one. My delegation is confident, nonetheless, that with the collective resolve and commitment of the United Nations and the international community in providing assistance towards nation-building, reconstruction, democratization and governance, the situation will gradually improve. On this note, my delegation is pleased to join the other delegations in sponsoring the draft resolution on this important question that has just been introduced by the Permanent Representative of Germany, to whom we express our deep appreciation.

Mr. Atta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly gathers here today to continue its deliberations on the development of the situation in Afghanistan. These developments still enjoy international attention on the part of the international community, not only because of their immediate impact on international peace and security, but also because we continue to look forward to rebuilding the Afghan society and State based on full respect of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Afghanistan.

Egypt has been closely following the efforts exerted by the Afghan transitional Administration and welcomes the progress made in several fields with the support of the international community, as is shown by the Security Council mission's report on Afghanistan. We are, however, concerned about the challenges that may befall the political and peace process if those challenges are not dealt with seriously enough and their root causes are not remedied within the framework of the unity of purpose and national destiny of the Afghan people. In this context, we would like to affirm that the international community looks forward to establishing a multilateral and pluralistic democratic State in Afghanistan that would take into consideration all factions of society in its decision-making and that believes in the rule of law and the constitution and respect for human rights, and maintains relations of good-neighbourliness and respect for the principles of international law. This cannot be achieved in an atmosphere of instability, tension and lack of security. While we welcome Security Council resolution 1510 (2003) to expand the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) as a supporting element of the efforts of the transitional Government in spreading its authority and jurisdiction all over the country, we stress the importance of strengthening and reforming the security sector and of intensifying reconstruction efforts and political and constitutional reform to ensure the creation of a suitable environment that would help to restore security and stability as soon as possible and build the foundations of a fledgling Afghan Government on solid ground.

We pay tribute to the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, and other members of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to help the Afghan people achieve security. Egypt calls, within the framework of the United Nations, for the expansion of the work of that Mission, which plays a pivotal role in Afghanistan. In this respect, we believe that a number of points must be taken into consideration if we are to achieve the goal of rebuilding Afghanistan. First of all, the primary responsibility for peace and a political solution in Afghanistan lies with the Afghan people alone.

Secondly, we reaffirm the right of all the Afghan people to participate in public and political life, taking into consideration, as in other societies, the cultural and religious characteristics of Afghan society.

Thirdly, the international community is called upon to provide considerable financial and moral support for the political process and for reconstruction efforts in all sectors of the Afghan State.

Fourthly, the process of creating a strong Afghan army that represents all factions of society and is capable of providing security and stability and of protecting the borders must be speeded up.

Fifthly, the formation of a just and effective judicial system must be accelerated, so that the rule of law and respect for the constitution can be ensured as soon as possible, and those responsible for human rights violations are held accountable. Sixthly and lastly, there is a need to take strong action to deal with all those who are involved in the production and distribution of drugs. International assistance must be provided to the transitional administration in their efforts to combat the spread of drugs.

Mr. Nambiar (India): A review of the political situation and of progress in the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan assumes the utmost importance in the light of the efforts under way to construct a vibrant, stable and economically self-sufficient democracy in the country after decades of instability and misrule. We therefore welcome this opportunity to participate in the discussion of this item on the agenda of the General Assembly.

Today marks the second anniversary of the Bonn Agreement on Afghanistan. Few would contest the scope and depth of the changes that have taken place in Afghanistan since then. Foremost among them has been the implantation of the seeds of democratic values in Afghanistan. The enunciation of those values began with the convening of the Loya Jirga. They were reinforced by the recent release of the draft constitution ahead of the Constitutional Loya Jirga, and we all hope that this process will culminate in the holding of presidential and general elections.

India has supported the political process in Afghanistan as the best way of ensuring the stability of the country and the economic and social development of its people. Adherence to the implementation schedule laid down in the Bonn Agreement has been a strong indicator of the success of the political process so far. It is important that the time lines relating to implementation of the remaining milestones in the political process be maintained. This will demonstrate the resolve of the international community to remain steadfast against the attempts of Taliban remnants and other interests to derail the process.

The development of national institutions, the introduction of economic and fiscal systems and the commencement of economic programmes and reconstruction activities are all indicators of the rapid progress that has been achieved in Afghanistan over the past two years. The credit for these achievements must go necessarily to the people of Afghanistan, led by President Hâmid Karzai and his Government. They have received the steadfast support of the international community in their efforts.

Unfortunately, the strong desire and will of the Afghan people to propel themselves and their country out of the dark ages of Taliban rule into the twenty-first century by adopting the political, economic and social systems of the current age have been obstructed by the same regressive forces that have held back the country in recent decades. The threat posed by the regrouping of Taliban cadres and their sympathizers, particularly in the south and south-eastern parts of the country, has been highlighted in all of the Secretary-General's recent reports on Afghanistan and in the debates held in the Security Council.

The Security Council mission, which returned from Afghanistan last month, concluded, in paragraph 3 of its report (S/2003/1074), that "insecurity caused by terrorist activities, factional fights and drug-related crime" remained the major concern of the Afghans. One of the main recommendations of the mission was that all neighbours of Afghanistan should fully implement the Kabul Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations of 22 December 2002 and redouble their efforts, in particular within the framework of the tripartite commission, to preserve peace and security, especially in the southern and south-eastern areas.

Terrorism and the systematic campaign to target international organizations, aid agencies and non-governmental organizations represent a direct challenge to the efforts of the Afghan Government to assert its control throughout that country. They also undermine efforts to rehabilitate sections of the Afghan population that have been particularly vulnerable to the instability that has plagued the country in the past. The Security Council mission report notes, in paragraph 22, that these threats have "significantly slowed reconstruction by limiting the access of government,

international humanitarian and development agencies." It concludes that long-term stability for Afghanistan cannot be achieved without the cooperation of the neighbouring States.

Another area of particular concern is the issue of drugs in Afghanistan. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has drawn attention to the surge in drug cultivation and trafficking in Afghanistan. What is particularly alarming is the fact that a small area of Afghanistan, mainly concentrated on its southern and south-eastern borders, has the capacity to supply almost three quarters of the heroin sold in Europe and virtually all the heroin sold in Russia. Also disconcerting are the linkages between drug trafficking and terrorism. A conference on drugs held in Paris in May highlighted the nexus between drug trafficking and the financing of terrorism, and recommended urgent, swift and coordinated action to address the problem.

At this critical stage in Afghanistan's development, the continued support and assistance of the international community is vital. Economic development and reconstruction activities must go hand in hand with efforts to check attempts by the Taliban and other negative forces to regroup within the country.

India has continued to contribute to the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan. Despite other calls on our resources, we have committed up to $270 million for Afghanistan's reconstruction. We have undertaken, in partnership with the Government of Afghanistan, projects in a number of sectors, ranging from transportation, airlines and telecommunications, to health, education and agriculture. India has also offered the Afghan Government and people expertise in areas such as information technology, the judiciary and police training. As part of its assistance activities, India has initiated work on some major infrastructure projects in power transmission, hydro-electricity, irrigation and road construction. India has undertaken its programme of economic assistance in Afghanistan with a firm belief in Afghan ownership.

In our view, external efforts should reinforce and support Afghan aspirations and decisions. The edifice of an independent and stable Afghanistan can only be established if Afghanistan can maintain normal and friendly relations with all States, particularly its neighbours, but without any country claiming special rights over the people or territory of Afghanistan. India's relations with Afghanistan are based on mutually supportive bilateral relations. It is our aim and endeavour to strengthen the natural and historical process in the region as a means of contributing to its stability and development.

Afghanistan is at a delicate crossroads between regression and modernity, anarchy and stability, darkness and light. The fate of the Afghan people is inextricably linked to the security and stability of the international community, as evident in the aftermath of 11 September 2001. There is no choice before the international community other than to support the Afghan Government and people in their endeavour to place their country beyond the shadows of its recent past.

Mr. Cengizer (Turkey): Turkey has already aligned itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union. In light of Turkey's deep-rooted historical and friendly ties with Afghanistan, I am taking the floor to further highlight a number of points with regard to my country's views concerning the recent developments in Afghanistan.

Turkey is a sponsor of the present draft resolution, which we think honestly reflects both the successes achieved and the setbacks encountered in the implementation of the Bonn Agreement.

The latter part of the draft resolution, which deals with the humanitarian issues, is as important as the former, which addresses the political and security questions. We hope that the text as a whole relays a strong message of solidarity with the Afghan people and reaffirms, at the same time, the determination and commitment of the international community to alleviate the human suffering of the Afghans.

We strongly deplore the resurgence of violence in Afghanistan during the past few months. Not only the elements of Operation Enduring Freedom, but several non-governmental organizations and the United Nations itself have been targeted causing tragic losses of life. We condemn, once again, terrorism in all its forms. Those acts of violence, along with the existing tensions in the country, show that we need to enhance forthwith the conditions of security and stability.

In doing so, Sir, we must heed the cardinal principle of the indivisibility of security. Security issues in Afghanistan should be handled from a

comprehensive perspective, lest we should see the vacuums created by our own hands filled with forces of destruction. In that vein, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme has to move cautiously and avoid creating privileged exemptions and intolerable imbalances during its implementation.

Turkey welcomes and supports the assumption of the command and coordination of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan by NATO. The expansion of the authority of ISAF throughout the country responds to the rational needs of security as Security Council resolution 1510 (2003) also attests.

NATO has now appointed Mr. Hikmet Çetin, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey and Speaker of the Turkish Parliament, as its Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan. While welcoming that decision, given our country's special relationship with the Afghan people, we wish him every success.

We follow closely the ongoing political reconstruction process in Afghanistan. As may be recalled, the Bonn process is envisaged to embrace the whole of the country, and as such, its main principle is to safeguard equal opportunity to all entities so that they can be represented in governmental structures. The beleaguered history of Afghanistan proves that no single group should attempt to prevail over the others.

Hence, we regard equitable distribution of rights and privileges, along with the resulting responsibilities, as of paramount importance for achieving harmonious transition to the stability that the Afghan people deserve. Likewise, we call upon all groups in the country to pursue policies that fit with the general agenda of Afghanistan, and not solely their own ends as they see fit.

It is evident that the firm commitment of the international community to Afghanistan and the Afghan people should continue. I commend the untiring and dedicated work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the toil of the Afghan Transitional Administration in responding to the challenges of this historic moment, and reiterate the active commitment of the Turkish Government to the security, reconstruction and welfare of Afghanistan.

Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine): It is indeed crucial and timely for the General Assembly to debate the situation in Afghanistan today, a few days before an important event, the convening of the Constitutional Loya Jirga. Needless to say, the finalization of the constitutional process is a cornerstone for restoring Afghanistan's statehood. Unprecedented in the history of that country, long torn by war, that process will require painstaking efforts, patience, tolerance and a firm and shared commitment to peace on the part of the Afghan people.

Ultimately, the key to the success of that process is the will of the Afghan people. We are therefore particularly pleased to express our deepest gratitude to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his Special Representative Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, for their consistent and continued efforts in supporting Afghanistan at this critical juncture of Afghan history.

The work done during the last two years by the Transitional Administration in implementing the Bonn Agreement is impressive. A visible sign of progress can be found in almost every sphere where the United Nations is involved, specifically in the successful campaign to get children back to school, in the introduction of a new Afghan currency, in restoration of the financial system, in an increase in agricultural production and in the massive voluntary return of refugees to their homeland — the world's largest such return, in the last 30 years.

Ukraine welcomes the gradual and irreversible re-establishment of Government institutions in the country. At the same time we all know that Afghanistan still faces acute security problems. We are deeply concerned with the possibility of a relapse into the warlord culture and lawlessness in some parts of the country and hope that measures taken by the central Government will bring positive results.

In that connection we would like to stress the importance for regional security of full adherence by Afghanistan's neighbouring countries, first of all, to the principles of respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of the Afghan State and to the provisions of the 2002 Kabul Declaration on Good-neighbourly Relations (S/2002/1416, annex).

It is evident that cooperation with and support from the international community at this stage remain equally important. It is therefore absolutely imperative to help maintain security, at least in key areas. Ukraine

welcomes the adoption by the Security Council of its resolution 1510 (2003), which expands the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force. We look forward to its swift implementation.

Ukraine also expresses its full support for the efforts of the international community towards the creation of a national Afghan army and police force that would be acceptable to the overwhelming majority of the Afghan people. We commend the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Turkey, Italy and other nations for their leading role in providing the necessary training. We commend the Government of Japan for its assistance to the demobilization programmes. In our view, a clear plan of activities for new security institutions should be worked out.

Peace and stability in Afghanistan depend to a large extent on the international community's sustained engagement in providing funding for humanitarian assistance and for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country. The resources of major international organizations and donor nations, as well as the capabilities of neighbouring countries, should be engaged more vigorously, as they are indispensable to improving the post-conflict situation.

We are pleased to note the reaffirmation by the donor community at the Dubai meetings on 21 September 2003 of its commitments regarding Afghanistan. I would also like to stress the readiness of my Government to provide assistance within the relevant United Nations programmes, and to share with the Afghan authorities our experience in such spheres as mine clearance, rehabilitation of transport, irrigation and mining systems and energy transportation.

The fight against the production of illegal drugs is yet another task which calls for special attention on the part of the international community. Ukraine shares the concerns about the increased opium cultivation in Afghanistan, which threatens peace and security in the region and provides traffickers and terrorists with a major source of income. That issue is of considerable concern for Ukraine as it is a potential transit country. It is regrettable that the comprehensive anti-narcotics strategy, including the provision of alternative livelihoods to poppy cultivation, has faltered this year. We reiterate our full support for the Transitional Administration's decision to ban poppy production, and we praise its commitment to fight opium cultivation. Still, we believe that the country needs greater international assistance in developing its law enforcement capacity and in providing opium-growing farmers with alternative means of livelihood.

We are pleased to sponsor the draft resolution (A/58/L.32) on Afghanistan prepared by the delegation of Germany, a country which continues to play an outstanding role in the Afghan peace process. We believe that the draft resolution is yet another manifestation of the international community's support for the goal of establishing a lasting peace in Afghanistan.

Finally, I would like to stress — and in fact to propose — that we should ask the Secretary-General to convey the content of our discussion today and of the draft resolution that we are about to adopt to President Hamid Karzai of the Transitional Administration of Afghanistan as a message of support from the international community to the Afghan people.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran): Over the past two years, the Afghan people, led by President Karzai and assisted by the international community, have gone a long way towards getting rid of the Taliban and discarding or isolating terrorists and extremists who once held a reign of terror over their country. A new path towards the political and economic reconstruction of the country has been embarked upon, and several important milestones in the implementation of the Bonn Agreement have already been passed.

At the present time, we are at yet another critical juncture in the political process. Having witnessed a number of positive developments, such as the successful launch of a new national currency, some advancement in reconstruction projects, progress in the reform of the security sector and the start of a national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration campaign, we welcome the release of a draft constitution and the preparations for the Constitutional Loya Jirga. The start of the voter registration drive in preparation for general elections is another welcome development. Moreover, we are pleased that, over the past two years, all Afghans have displayed a great deal of interest and perseverance in upholding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of their nation.

However, major challenges still lie ahead, and the political process has yet to be made secure and irreversible. Insecurity, factional discord and narcotic

drug production continue to take their toll on peace and stability in Afghanistan.

The remnants of the Taliban and Al-Qaida who are attempting to regroup and conduct acts of subversion mainly in southern and south-eastern Afghanistan, are responsible for most of the insecurity. Attacks on Government officials and international aid workers are destabilizing the situation in those areas and hindering reconstruction activities. We especially condemn the recent attacks on United Nations offices and staff members and the murder of a French member of the staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which led to the removal of 30 foreign United Nations staff members from large areas of southern and eastern Afghanistan and the closing of refugee reception centres in four provinces.

Subversive activities are all the more dangerous because they also aim at depriving parts of the population, notably in the majority Pashtun areas, of the ability to exercise their right to fully take part in the political process. While we stress the need for all Afghan ethnic groups, including the Pashtuns, to be able to fully enjoy their rights as Afghan citizens and to be proportionately represented in the central Government, we believe that the remnants of the Taliban and Al-Qaida should not be allowed to disrupt and delay the implementation of the Bonn Agreement.

Narcotics-related activities are another major concern for the Afghans, and for many other countries, including mine. Despite sincere efforts by the Afghan Government, we have witnessed an increasing trend in the production and trafficking in drugs and a growing narcotics economy that remains largely unchecked. It is alarming that, as found by a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime survey last October, opium poppy cultivation has spread to new areas of Afghanistan and the total area involved nationwide has risen. It is obvious that the production of thousands of metric tons of opium and its derivatives this year could adversely affect the legal economy and threaten reconstruction activities and the smooth progress of the political process.

As the remnants of the Taliban and Al-Qaida are among the major beneficiaries of the drug money, there is an absolute need for the international community to assist the Government in the implementation of its comprehensive national drug control strategy, including institution-building, strengthening law enforcement and promoting alternative livelihoods. As it is also a proven fact that the fight against the traffic in drugs is more effective and less costly along the Afghan borders, the international community should support the efforts made by Afghanistan's neighbouring States along trafficking routes to curb the flow of illicit drugs. My country is one of those that suffer enormously as a result of drugs coming out of Afghanistan. International support is indispensable if the Iranian Government is to sustain its ongoing resolute fight against drug trafficking.

Factional discord and its adverse impact on security and reconstruction in Afghanistan are a cause for concern. Moreover, there is an urgent need for the further expansion of the authority of the central Government throughout the country. The strengthening of the new national army, national police, border police and other central institutions, as well as the control of national revenue by Kabul, are of great importance. My Government has spared no effort in helping the Afghan Government in this respect. We offered — and in several instances used — our good offices in mitigating and resolving unrest in various parts of Afghanistan.

Likewise, my Government also fully appreciates the important role that the neighbouring countries can play in assisting the Afghan central Government to fulfil its tasks. In this respect, we are committed to the Kabul Declaration on Good-neighbourly Relations of 22 December 2002, and are doing our utmost to control our common border with Afghanistan. We are pleased to note that the Afghan provinces adjacent to Iranian territory are among the quietest and calmest. My Government is determined to continue its policy of assisting the Afghan people in their endeavour to rebuild their country, and is fulfilling the pledge undertaken at the Tokyo Conference.

Given the enormity of the task — especially after years of chaos and lawlessness — the Afghan people need all kinds of support from the international community — moral, political, economic or security-related. We, the members of the international community, should stay the course and help the Afghans carry the task through, despite the difficulties. The signs the Afghans receive from the outside world should be ones of encouragement and should be indicative of steadfast understanding and assistance. The international community at large, including all Afghanistan's neighbours, has a great deal at stake in

the context of the current trend. It needs to maintain it at all costs and ensure that it becomes irreversible.

Undoubtedly, the United Nations system, led by the Secretary-General, and the Special Representative, Ambassador Brahimi, have so far played an important central role in rebuilding Afghanistan — a role they should be greatly commended for.

Allow me to conclude by expressing our pleasure in sponsoring the draft resolution introduced by Germany, and our appreciation to the German delegation for its excellent work in carrying out the negotiations and consultations on the draft resolution.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.